



NACCHO Statement Voice to Parliament

July 2023



NACCHO
National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

THE NACCHO BOARD SUPPORTS THE *ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART*

NACCHO supports constitutional recognition and a First Nations Voice to Parliament. We are an organisation representing 145 Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations operating over 550 clinics across Australia, delivering services to over 410,000 Australians.

NACCHO supports the full implementation of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, including a Voice, treaty, and truth.

Alignment with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Voice also aligns with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Supporting self-determination and building the capacity of the community-control sector is central to the commitment that all Australian governments made as part of this seminal Agreement. The Voice will only lend strength to the Agreement and to existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and structures.

The power of a Voice

There is one excellent example of what happens when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a voice. It was when we led the way during COVID. The Aboriginal community-controlled sector stepped up early, knowing that the COVID pandemic had the potential to cause devastation among our people.

Almost 2,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives were saved by allowing our communities to design their own COVID responses in their own communities, when the Commonwealth Government heard our voice and even handed over the COVID funding direct to our organisations.

In early 2020, our sector asked the Commonwealth to sit down with us and get an emergency plan in place. Together, we set up the National Indigenous COVID Advisory Committee co-chaired by NACCHO and the Australian Government and including representatives from all state and territory governments. In addition, there was timely funding provided by the Australian Government, disbursed to our members. They knew, better than anyone else, what our communities needed. This meant that targeted funding was on the ground within days. The response had to be rapid, and it was.

As a result of our own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID response, lives were saved. The original estimate was that 2,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would die. This was the estimated share of deaths based on population share, burden of disease and comorbidities. Yet only about 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lost their lives. A voice and a genuine partnership with the Department of Health, therefore, saved almost 2,000 lives. This is the power of a Voice.

